

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

A Letter from John Jay

From John Jay to his Excellency the President of Congress.
Office for Foreign Affairs.
19th May 1785.

Sir,

It is well known that these countries prior to the late war carried on a valuable trade with Honduras, and Campeachy, and employed above one hundred vessels in exchanging at the English settlements, Beef, Pork, and other kinds of Provisions for Logwood, Mahogany, Sarsaparilla &c.

It being the Policy of Spain to keep other nations at a distance from their American Dominions, she beholds those settlements with Pain and Jealousy. The uneasiness which subsists at present, between those two nations on that Subject, seems to offer us an opportunity of negotiating with the English for a participation in their right to cut Logwood, or at least, to trade with them, thus as formerly. It is not improbable that they may consent to strengthen their Forting in those Ports, by interesting us in the advantages resulting from their continuing to maintain it. To demand their Ministry in the first instance, in formally and explicitly on the subject, can cost us little.

If Congress should think proper to take this matter into consideration, and instruct their Ministers, or permit me to write to them about it, secrecy will, I think, be particularly necessary; for there is reason to apprehend that Spain and France would not consider our obtaining that object, to be consistent with their views, as it appears to me to be with our interest.

Yd.

I have the Honor to be &c.
(Signed) John Jay